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MR. SMITH'S ADDRESS.

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A D D R E S S ,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ASSOCIATED MECHANICS & MANUFACTURERS

OF THE

STATE OF NEW-HAMPSHIRE,

AT THE

CELEBRATION OF THEIR ANNIVERSARY,

IN PORTSMOUTH,

OCT. 13, 1831.

BY JOHN SMITH.

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PORTSMOUTH:

R. FOSTER, PRINTER.

1831.



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PORTSMOUTH, Oct. 14, 1831.

BROTHER JOHN SMITH,—

The undersigned Committee, in compliance with the unanimous vote of the Mechanic Association, present their acknowledgments for the able, ingenious, and interesting Address, delivered by you at the celebration of their twenty eighth Anniversary, on the 13th inst. and respectfully request a copy for the press.

ANGLEY BOARDMAN,
BENJAMIN HOLMES,
GEORGE HAM.

PORTSMOUTH, OCTOBER 16, 1831.

Brethren,—

Yours of the 15th inst. was promptly received, in which you, in behalf of the Association, request a copy of the Address for publication. Any thing that would gratify the wishes of a majority of my Brethren, would be doing violence to my feelings to refuse them. Notwithstanding the reluctance I may feel in consequence of the Address not having been written with the most distant idea of its passing the ordeal of public investigation, I submit it to your disposal, wishing it was more worthy your acceptance, and relying on the candor and forbearance of a generous public.

Yours, Gentlemen, with Respect,

JOHN SMITH.

Brothers, Langley Boardman,
Benjamin Holmes,
George Ham.

A D D R E S S.

BRETHREN AND FRIENDS,—

SOME sort of apology, may be expected of me for thus coming forward, on this occasion, from the retired walks of a Mechanic, and presuming to instruct and inform you in matters and things, relating to the good or comfort of this life.

As it respects my brethren of the Association, who know my desires to promote its interests, likewise my readiness to bear my portion of its duties and labours, and my incompetency to the task they have set me; all excuse seems unnecessary. But, to our respected friends, who honour us with their presence on this, our anniversary, what shall we say to them? shall we attempt to arouse their particular attention, and induce in them the belief that all nature is about to be explored, and its intricacies and phenomena exposed and laid open to their view in such a simple and familiar manner, that each and every one, may pick and cull of its beauties and perfections? No, the task is too big for me, or for any one, who, was (not as Br. Greenleaf says, trained to the hammer; but was from early life) trained to the Brush, which, by the way, is quite as laborious, and requires as large a sacrifice of time, to obtain the necessities and comforts of life. Thus circumstanced, our friends will not expect much, therefore, the disappointment will be lessened; and we have the happiness to believe, that the mantle of charity will be extended over our foibles and discrepancies.

Man, Brethren, on his first induction into our earth, was as naked in mind, as in body. Having no experience of the past, he could not possibly anticipate the future; therefore, he roamed about in the midst of a wild, unconscious of evils or sufferings of any kind, and entirely at the direction of his then present inclinations. But, directly, the pains of hunger seize upon him, and compel him to search for food; thus he saw the necessity of providing for his own subsistence and by the inclemency of the weather, he was compelled to clothe himself and provide some habitation or shelter, to protect from the storm, as well, as from his more voracious enemy, the inhabitants of the forests in common with himself. And so we discover, that the absolute wants and necessities of man, first called forth his industry, and aroused and improved his dormant faculties, and by degrees disclosed the powers of the human mind.

In this way he moved on from step to step, until he learned to resist and overcome the elements, to seize upon his prey, defend himself from danger and thus alleviate and better his condition, we likewise discover that self-preservation, aversion to pain, and a desire for happiness, were the simple motives, which brought man forth from the state of savage ignorance in which nature had left him. But man was destined by his Creator, to make still further progress in his lonely situation, and still further develope, that incomprehensible something which God had given him, called the mind. This was effected by an union and combination with his fellow man. The principles of happiness and self love, always on the alert, suggested the propriety and necessity of making use of that newly discovered principle, which was introduced by a much respected friend* of the mechanics of this town, and in this place, a short time since, we mean the *union of effort*. Perpetually beset as he was by dangers on every side, assailed by enemies, haunted by hunger, by wild beasts and venomous serpents, he began to feel his own individual weakness, and impelled by a desire of security and by a reciprocity of sentiment relative to the evils under which he laboured, he gladly united his before separate abilities and corporeal strength; accordingly, when one was attacked, all defended; or when danger of any sort threatened either of war or famine, all assisted

*Andrew Halliburton, Esq.

and repelled. Thus it is discovered from the mere necessity of the case, that the foundation of social society was laid, and laid too as one would naturally suppose, on a permanent foundation, for the interest, benefits and profits of the whole were involved.

Society thus circumstanced, its members could pass their time in more perfect ease and security in the communication, examination and comparison of each other's thoughts and ideas.

Curiosity and reflection, naturally led them to extend their researches still further onward, into the nature of such things as came directly under their immediate observation, such as the revolution of the seasons, the properties of the vegetable and animal kingdom, choosing what was good and palatable, and avoiding what was bad ; taming and subjecting such animals as might be conducive to their comfort or convenience ; planting and cultivating the earth the produce of which abundantly repaid them for all their toil of labour and investigation. In addition to this, the discovery was made, that a much larger number of persons might be sustained in a less extent of territory than they had ever before conceived of ; therefore, avoiding the necessity of continually moving from one section of country to another, as was the ancient custom, in consequence of which, they constructed more permanent habitations, hence the formation of villages and towns, and at length Empires, Kingdoms and Countries.

So, Brethren, we are enabled to discover from this faint picture of the progress of man, from a state of ignorance and imbecility, that he was designed by nature for society and social life, and that he has the ability in and of himself, by a proper application of his faculties of raising himself to a very exalted and enviable situation. Happy would it have been for him, had he felt content to have stopped here and spent his time and talents in the study of nature and of nature's God, and the best interests of himself and his fellow man.

But not so, a fatality seems to have pursued him all but to the brink of ruin. That ever restless, and aspiring disposition of man, accompanied with covetousness, the legitimate child of ignorance, has followed and haunted him, and car-

ried him away by the attraction of objects which only flatter the senses. Not content with the rich productions of the earth, and whatever of comfort and luxury which might be obtained by their own industry—a system of monopoly and over-reaching is put into operation, with a view of obtaining from each other whatever they may possess without compensation. In pursuance of this object, physical force is introduced; the strong fall upon the weak; and wrest from them the honest profits of their labour; the weak in return solicit the aid of their friends, until the whole community are found reciprocally tormenting each other; a fatal and general discord becomes established, man is armed against man, family against family, town against town, and the earth is converted into a theatre of discord and anarchy. It is thus, that the seeds of enmity are sown in the very bosom of States and Countries, by drawing lines of distinction between one citizen and another, and so dividing the same society of men into oppressors and oppressed.

It is under circumstances of this sort, that anarchy obtains, some one more ambitious individual than the rest, either by open violence, or private intrigue, turns the arms of the community against itself, and builds up a political despotism, or by a shew of hypocrisy and external piety, under the specious title of ambassador from heaven, imposes a fanatical yoke if possible, worse than the former for its cruelties and injustice. It still remains unparalleled in the history of the world and we hope for the credit of mankind it ever may.

In the preceding remarks, Brethren, I am well aware that no new ideas are introduced, I am sure, they are not original with me, neither do I claim much in the language in which they are written, but their application to the commencement of social society must be apparent to all, particularly when we consider the incapacity of man individually to supply all his rational and variegated wants, no one man is capable, without the aid of his fellows, of supplying himself in every case; these wants whether real or imaginary, act on every individual of the community with equal force, and naturally compel us into society, for the comfort and convenience of the whole. The idea of individual independence

and happiness is the extreme of folly. Nature never intended social, intellectual man for misanthropy—the love of society is planted within us, it grows with our growth and strengthens with our strength and rarely ever forsakes us while life endures. But to return to our subject—

The disordered state of society to which we just referred will not discourage, so long as it appears to be a fixed principle in every evil, whatsoever its magnitude may be, to effect its own cure, at least, it so appears in this case, for from circumstances not entirely unlike those just enumerated, this our happy Country and incomparable Constitution and consequent government, did arise—a government of equitable and just laws, proceeding from the people direct, and of course amenable to the people for its just and proper administration—viewing men as free and independant citizens. Under such a Constitution, we can live contentedly if we will, and happily if we choose.

In this our happy land, we have ever been in the habit of forming societies and Associations; many of which are recognised by the Government, for special purposes, such as tend generally to ameliorate the condition of man, in some way or other. Of such is this society of Associated Mechanics and Manufacturers, whose 28th anniversary, we this day celebrate.

The leading objects of this Association, are, as you may have observed by the reading of the Constitution, to reward the faithful, encourage the ingenious, and assist the necessitous. It may perhaps, be gratifying to some, and not altogether unprofitable, to give a partial history of the doings of this society in times past.

It was installed in Nov. 1802, and incorporated by a legislative act of this State the June following, 1803.

The average number of its members has been about 100. Its object ever has been to unite and advance the interests of its members, and their dependants, and to add dignity and respectability to this very useful and indispensable class of citizens, and we have the vanity to think it has not been altogether unsuccessful in its efforts.

Its operation has been to create and establish a confidence in each other, and by frequently associating together, and exchanging ideas, to inform and improve our minds, and learn more distinctly, our relative dependance and relationship one with another.

Respecting its charitable donations, much need not be said. Charity is a virtue well known to be eulogized by every one, there is a strange and inexpressible delight in the contemplation as well as the practice of it. We love it for its effects. It is harmonious in its tones, self-approving and heavenly in its operations. But, because it is possessed of these intrinsic and lovely qualities, can it be considered egotism in us to announce the fact, that we indulge, and practice, this virtue, with a view to induce others to enrole their names, where they may likewise have an opportunity of helping to cause the widow's heart to sing with joy? we think not—therefore, we state as a matter of historical fact, that there has been expended from the funds of this Association and by donation of its members for purposes of charity, a sum rising \$2,000, besides various other expenditures operating indirectly to the same end. This looks well Brethren, very well, and the consequence is, that much distress and misery have been averted, by very little individual expense.

But, Brethren, even this might be made to look better, if every philanthropic Mechanic of this town could be induced to become a member of this Society, and couple his energies with ours, in relieving the distresses of his fellows; and we now give them a public invitation, and promise them a warm and friendly reception.

Our Constitution makes it necessary, that all its members shall be Mechanics or Manufacturers, and of 21 years of age, of good moral character, and a guarantee that they have faithfully discharged their engagements with their masters. Likewise, that any member shall be expelled if he employ or entertain, or, in any way encourage any apprentice who may have left the person with whom he lived, without said person's consent.

This article is sufficient inducement alone, for any mechanic who is in the habit of keeping apprentices, to join this Society; its direct tendency is to benefit both parties, by establishing habits of industry and content; thereby, perfecting the apprentice in his business, and rendering him useful and profitable to his master and himself, and ornamental to society.

Again, one of the most permanent objects of this institu-

tion is to promote industry, good habits, and an increase of knowledge in the arts we profess individually. With regard to these things have we not been remiss in our duties! has as much been done as might be in the case? Heretofore, the plea of a low state of our funds has been urged—the want of a library, &c. But at present, this reasoning wont do; our funds to be sure, are still small, yet, something may be done with them, and our library is respectable, and if we may judge from the number of copies taken and returned annually (which is about 14 or 1500) we may say useful too. This we may argue with much propriety, is furthering good habits and increasing knowledge, by throwing before our brethren and apprentices a fund of information which may be had without money and without price. But all this, in the opinion of many, does not come quite up to the original design of the makers of our Constitution. Something more direct is thought to be necessary. To effect this purpose we would suggest the propriety of choosing a competent Committee to examine this subject thoroughly, and report at some convenient time and place.

With respect to the Library, Brethren, we think it an object well worthy the fostering and liberal hand of the Association. If the increase of Knowledge amongst Mechanics is an object, let us extend our patronage toward the Library, and hold up every inducement to our apprentices to read and examine, both by our example and precept. Solomon says, in all thy gettings, get knowledge.—It is the direct road to improvement in the arts and comforts of life—to esteem and respect—to wealth and happiness, and if you are fond of power, here you have it, for “*Knowledge is power*.”

It is very desirable to have the number of useful books increased in the Library, and by calling the attention of a liberal public toward this subject, we think there would be no difficulty in obtaining them. There are undoubtedly, hundreds of volumes, useless to the owners, now lying dormant on the shelves of many persons of this town, who would gladly deposit them on the shelves of the Apprentices Library, if called upon. Many valuable works have been obtained through the liberality of individuals, and more

might be procured. Perhaps, if the very liberal definition we apply to the term Apprentice, was more generally known, the public would feel a more lively interest in the Library. We admit no sectionality here; no lines of distinction or demarkation; the poor and rich have equal access. *Liberality* is our *motto*. All persons of 14 years of age, and under 21, actually employed at any business, by producing a responsible certificate for the safety of the book, have equal privileges. Thus you perceive, the benefits are not exclusive, but of a public nature. Still the Library is under the control and direction of the Mechanic Association.

One other requirement of the Constitution, to which we wish to call the attention for a moment, is, a *decree* of the Society. With a view of rewarding industry, fidelity and habits of sobriety, the association decree, that every Apprentice on arriving at the age of 21 years, who shall produce a certificate from the person with whom he served his apprenticeship, approving his conduct, shall be furnished with a certificate, sealed with the seal of the Association, signed by the President, and Vice President, and attested by the Secretary, recommending such Apprentice to the notice, encouragement, patronage and protection of all persons, in all countries, whithersoever he may choose to go. This we conceive to be of great importance to a young man, particularly to one who may have come from some distant parts to learn some art or trade here, and wishes to return; or to a native son, who may wish to travel; in either case, this certificate introduces him, and establishes his credit and reputation at once;—with this, he is no longer a stranger; and if business in his profession is to be had, one thus situated, is most likely to obtain it.

In 1820, an amendment to the Constitution was adopted, and a Fund established for the express purpose of affording immediate relief to the widow and orphan of any deceased brother. This fund was established by the voluntary subscriptions of the members of the Association, and is sustained by an assessment of 25 cents on each subscriber, at the death of any member. A committee of two is chosen, joined by the presiding officer, whose duty it is, to visit or communicate immediately with the widow or children of the

deceased, and present her or them, with the sum of \$20, and also, to tender the services of the members, in the settlement of the estate ; likewise, to attend this duty without fee or reward, and in cases of insolvency, to charge the usual fee in such cases, and remit the amount to the widow or orphans of the deceased. In this way, we attempt to assuage the poignancy of grief, and render all possible comfort and consolation to the survivors, both by counsel and money.

Thus, partially, have we attempted to describe and pourtray some of the prominent benefits, arising from Associations of this kind ; and if it should operate as an inducement to others to join us in the laudable effort of rendering the situation of our fellow creatures more comfortable, we shall have effected our purpose in part.

The doings of Associations of this sort, being generally if not necessarily of a private nature, makes it incumbent on its members, to come out, as we have this day, in a public manner, disclosing to our fellow-citizens, who, and what, we are, and what are our objects ; it is in this way we have obtained our members and been enabled to sustain the permanent and respectable station we at present occupy ; as a proof of this fact, we announce the pleasing intelligence that we initiated into this Association, last evening, nineteen industrious, respectable and worthy Mechanics of this town ; Brethren, an acquisition of this sort, is honest cause of gratulation. This being one of the modes in which we have been successful in obtaining members, thereby adding energy and usefulness to the institution ; we would suggest the propriety of establishing some permanent regulations, with respect to future celebrations ; perhaps triennial celebrations would not be too frequent for our interests.

Much has of late been said on the subject of Mechanics, as it respects their relative situation in Society, and, it is generally conceded, that they, as a class, do not occupy that respectable station, in many places, which good and honest men are entitled to. To this general remark we shall, and are obliged to subscribe, because it is true, at least in the opinion of your humble servant, it is true, and " pity 'tis, that it is true." Now, Brethren, we would seriously enquire why things are thus situated, and if good can possibly come of

this cold, unsocial, frigid temperature so discernable in many of our towns, villages and neighbourhoods and between man and man? Is it because we are more immoral, less honest and industrious, or more prodigal and dissipated, or of meaner extraction, or do we pay our debts with less punctuality? If so, then perhaps, 'tis just. But, we do not believe it. We cannot believe, that either or any of the above catalogue of crying sins, can be more sucessfully argued against the Mechanics in general, than against those who assume this undefinable, senseless, unmeaning, superiority. One fact we are certain of, and, out of respect to human nature, we with honest pride proclaim it. This state of feeling is gradually moving off we believe, to a climate more congenial to its nature—it is as opposite as the antipodes to the simplicity of our republic. Still, there are those who seem to have forgotten altogether, that very pertinent question of the Ancient Prophet—Have we not all one Father! Hath not one God created us?

This kind of doctrine would lead to a very different state of things, and we should be vastly more happy if it were more practised upon.

We are happy to have it in our power to state one other fact, in relation to this exclusive doctrine. It is not an indigenous plant of our happy country; it is of transatlantic growth and culture. Our soil never could have produced a plant so noxious to the health and happiness of the community. It is in essence, directly opposed to the spirit of a republic; in its operation, humiliating and degrading to the pride and feelings of a highminded, intelligent and well educated community of freemen. We hold most zealously and perseveringly, to the doctrine of equality. The upright and honest man is the gentleman; no matter what his occupation may be, whether Doctor or Tailor, Carpenter or Minister, Painter or Lawyer, and further, that the weight of influence is, and should be, with such men, did they but know the fact, and use the means always within their reach. What we most regret and censure in this case is, that the buisness, or profession of men, should be allowed to create unreal distinctions, amongst the labourers in the great temple of social happiness. The only difference in our opinion, which should be suffered to exist, is such as would naturally proceed

from actual and practical merit. The man of industrious, temperate, economical habits, who does as much as his means will allow, to promote his own improvement, and ameliorate the condition of those around him, though he may be poor, and unfortunate, and not have had the advantages of an education, ought to receive as much attention and respect, at least, as one who, with much greater advantages, squanders his time and property in idleness and dissipation, and struts with all the pomp and vanity of wealth.

The time ought to come, and will, when "worth shall make the man, and want of it, the fellow." With respect to this maxim, Brethren, I am a radical, and particularly partial to nationality, as much so, as that devoted and fortunate Pole, General Skrzyniecki—who wished the nationality of his Countrymen might be so deeply buried within their breasts, that nought but death could extinguish it. Let our own country be the emporium of our own habits and customs. We are populous enough, and intelligent enough, and should by this time, be independent enough. Let us from this time, henceforth, put an eternal embargo, on the importation of fashions, of hereditary nobility, and a monied aristocracy, which tend to mar our happiness, and so hem us round, and round with an unmeaning etiquette, that our very hairs begin to grow grey, before we can become acquainted with our fellow citizens. It is a formidable barrier to the growth and enterprise of any town, or city, and sufficient of itself, to paralyse the energies of any community, and draw down upon the heads of its votaries, the denunciations of all liberal, and public spirited men.

But, Brethren, times and things are changing. Old things are passing away. The spirit of liberality and general philanthropy have burst the cords with which they have been for ages bound, and are marching through our land disseminating their doctrines of general emancipation from ignorance. The votaries of science, in most every village and hamlet within our knowledge, have come forward gratuitously, and have offered to lecture publickly, on all the sciences within their knowledge, such as Philosophy, Astronomy, Mechanics, Chemistry, &c. &c. thereby disclosing the fact, that the greatest quantum of happiness to every man, is in exact proportion, to his acquirements, in the knowledge of all matters

and things around and about him. This is a day of improvement in very deed.—The spirit of knowledge, with her whole family of the arts and sciences, has appeared to us, and with her all powerful and nervous arm, has dispersed those foreign and antiquated notions of supremacy. The discovery is at length made, that the Arts and Sciences are so delicately interwoven with one another, and so beneficial to each other, that they cannot be separated, without material injury to both ; and such has been the effect, that the Manufacturer and the Chemist, the Mechanic and the Scholar, may now sit side by side, mutually instructing and improving each other, without any supercilious claims for precedence.

In consequence of this state of things, the discoveries that have been made, and which are daily making, become more generally known to all classes of men. The more the mind is instructed and enlarged the better man is protected from all imposition, and from both real and imaginary evils.—For instance, the disclosures of Chemistry have put to flight the whole *posse comitatus* of Hobgoblins, Ghosts, Spirits, Witches, Death Watches, &c. they all vanished at the dawn of intellectual scrutiny, never again to return and torment mankind—thus relieving the rising generation, of one of the evils of ignorance and consequent superstition.—Chemistry has other qualities, beside that of analizing Ghosts and Spookes. She is a great economist, and suffers none of the fragments to be lost, but carefully fills all her baskets. To attempt to enumerate all her habits of economy, of time and money, would be a labour of weeks, instead of minutes. One or two instances will suffice. The chemical process of bleaching, is now performed in a few days, whereas, it formerly consumed months ; this may be considered a rare instance of economy. Again, a London Chemist has discovered, that bread in baking, emits a vapour which can be condensed into a spirit of great strength, from which it is estimated that in the City of London, 800,000 gallons per annum, may be produced from what has been, from time immemorial, actually wasted : this circumstance shews the economical prowess of chemistry, in bold relief. It is not a very flattering discovery for temperance Societies, we acknowledge, but it must eventually save a

great amount of bread stuffs; for if the whiskey can be obtained and the bread saved, there is a certain and great gain. And those of us, who are favourable to temperance (and there are not a few,) must content ourselves with eating the bread, as advertised by some of the Bakers "*with all the Gin in it,*" and leave the vapour to be condensed by those who *think they want more stimulating.*

Once more, and I have done with this part of my subject. An instance of the benefits of Chemistry, in preserving a ship's company from actual suffering and death, occurred on board a vessel from this place, on a passage to Buenos Ayres a short time since. Her passage was protracted, in consequence of damage received in a gale, and she expended all her fresh water. In this melancholy situation, in the midsts of a salt ocean, and in calm and hot latitudes, you may form some faint idea of their distress. Her master being a reading and reflecting man, had resort to his books as a partial relief from this state of suffering. He fortunately took up a fragment of an old encyclopedia, where he found a process laid down, for distilling fresh water from salt; he immediately set to work, using his dinner pot for a boiler, his tea-kettle for a condenser, and some sheet lead he fortunately had on board, for a worm, and with this homespun still, he succeeded in saving his crew from a premature death.

Art, in the commencement of society, must of necessity have preceeded Science. Our first parents in the garden, who by the way, are the first operatives, of which we have any account, could not, in the nature of things, have had any knowledge of science. They made their clothing of the rudest material, and not much in the *modern style*, we suspect, by mere dint of art, compelled by necessity. Science now takes the lead, that is, the improvements and discoveries which are now made in the arts, are oftener, by the investigation of principle, than from bare experiment or accidental circumstance. Notwithstanding, many valuable discoveries have been made, entirely by accident; for instance, Sir I. Newton, from the mere circumstance of seeing an apple fall from a tree, discovered the grand principle of gravitation, by which the whole planetary system is governed--And we are struck with surprise and astonishment, at its simplicity and grandeur. But should we indulge a

few moments in a more minute examination of this great discovery, and learn, that by this simple law of nature, the ebb and flow of the tides, the motions of the earth, the moon and stars, likewise the return of day and night, summer and winter, are all regulated, we are ready to exclaim in wonder and astonishment, these are thy works, Almighty Father, in wisdom thou hast made them all.

History informs us, that the power of steam was discovered by a circumstance not more unfrequent than the one just alluded to; the lifting of a valve or cover from a vessel, containing boiling water.

This power like many others, has been known for a great length of time, still it has never been converted to any important, or useful purpose, until within a few years.

Steam is as old as time, and has been generated in a thousand different ways, and escaped into the surrounding atmosphere unobserved. Almost from time immemorial, have our grandmothers, and maiden aunts, been in the daily habit of generating this all powerful agent. Their plan is a very easy and pleasant one. 'Tis done by infusing a few spoons full of a particular herb, which is brought from China, into a small quantity of fresh water, and set on the coals to simmer. This operation, was not so much with a view to obtain steam, as it was to obtain the exhilarating beverage produced by this simple process; in this way, they have proceeded to this time, excepting a partial suspension, which occurred about the year '74 when a band of hard hearted souls went on board the ships in Boston, and threw this precious plant all overboard, in consequence of which, their operations were for a time suspended, excepting occasionally by stealth, so fearful were they that the art would be lost; since that time, the good old souls have been allowed to prosecute their business of steam generation, unmolested. Notwithstanding all this familiarity with this all powerful agent, it was left to our own illustrious Fulton to apply its matchless powers to the profits and benefits of man. Its present application is almost indefinable. It spins and weaves for us—it pumps and rows for us—It digs and hoes for us—and with inconceivable power, and alacrity, it conveys our persons, and heavy burdens, to any given distance, in much less time than any animal power

can do it and still is not fatigued ; and to what purposes it may not in future be successfully applied, God only knows.

With respect to these great discoveries in nature, which seem to have been brought forward by mere accident, we would enquire, how many rational creatures have seen apples fall from trees, and covers raised from the boiling of water in a pot, and still, never dreamed of the great principles therein contained, until Newton, and Fulton explored them. From such circumstances, we are enabled to discover the advantages of Science.

These circumstances, are not introduced with a view of disclosing any thing new. I dare say the most of you have read them often in the books ; but with a view of making plain the fact, that the studious and well informed man whether self taught, or school taught, is vastly more in the way of making discoveries, than the ignorant and careless man ; particularly if he be a practical mechanic ; his knowledge of mechanical tools and their particular use, is of especial advantage in making his own instruments, altering and repairing his works necessary for his designs, whatever they may be ; this is a truth too plain to admit of dispute—in fact his capacity in every respect is increased.

Again, it must be obvious to every one, that in proportion as a mechanic possesses the principles of Science, will be his facilities in business of any description. We know of no one thing, that may not be done quite as well by a well informed man, as by an ignorant one, and we think the chance of improvement much better. Suppose the business, in which you are at present engaged, should *run down* as we term it, your success in some other would much depend on the general information you might possess in *selecting and executing*—your chances for employment and better pay, depend much on your intelligence and capacity : so that in any way we view this matter, there is a positive gain in understanding the principles of the Arts, and whenever this very desirable state of things shall arrive, we may safely conclude that the improvements and inventions of mechanics, will be more numerous, profitable and useful, than those of any other class, and better adapted to the every day wants and comforts of life.

We are aware, that many objections may be made, and

excuses found, for not paying more attention to the improvement of the mind, such as poverty, a large family, &c. which require all our time. These are circumstances which require much attention, we admit; but by a proper distribution of time, these difficulties may be obviated in some measure, and many opportunities for reading and study found, which are in many instances spent to little advantage to ourselves, or families. We have it from very good authority, that the Bible may be read through in about 70 hours. This being the fact, a great many useful and profitable books may be read in the course of a year, and should the members of this Association adopt a rule individually, to read a certain number of hours each day, or week, for one year, in some work that shall tend to improve and enlarge the mind, there is no doubt but they would be satisfied with the benefits accruing to themselves; neither is there doubt, that the salutary influences resulting from such a course, would be felt in the community at large. The ease with which books, of every description, may be obtained in this section of the country, puts to silence all objections on that subject.

Our daily, semi weekly, weekly, monthly and quarterly publications, are of themselves a host. Then our libraries, both public and private, are in such abundance as to render it in the power of every one to obtain books of any description.

While speaking of the benefits of improvement in the mechanics of this country, particularly members of mechanic Associations, and Apprentices; it may be well to contrast our situation, with that of some of the European kingdoms. It is beyond all question that the mechanics of this country, are on a much better footing than in any part of Europe. Here we are at full liberty to choose, and follow any business we please, and locate ourselves where we please. For instance, one of our Apprentices after having fulfilled his engagement with his master, and being armed with a certificate from under the seal of the Association, may go where he pleases, into any section of the country, without special licence from any arbitrary power, being free from all restraint either of traditional customs, or other power, he marches forward fearlessly, knowing that on *merit* alone he stands. His certificate, introducing him as a good moral character, of sober industrious habits, its operation is as a letter of credit to a stranger.

Not so with our brethren across the water—they are oppressed by despotic restraints—the spirit of personal enterprise is unbent in consequence of these restraints; they, therefore, cease to feel that responsibility for themselves, which otherwise would be felt, did the government, under which they live, forbear, and leave them at liberty, to act without its arbitrary interference. This European policy in many instances, amounts to all but absolute slavery.

In Paris, the Mechanic is not allowed to set up for himself without a licence from the Government, and that is not the worst of it; the number of licensed Mechanics is small, and established by law; the journeymen consequently are compelled to remain as they are, *hewers of wood and drawers of water*. Under such a state of things, it must be obvious to every one, that much poverty and depression necessarily exist; one moment's reflection, brethren, will convince you of the absurdity of such a regulation; deprive the young men of this country the liberty of entering into business for themselves, when they please, what think you the consequence would be? why we should all be for “*poling the house*” *at once*, and setting matters to rights, and can it be very surprising that the French Mechanics, after having passed through one Revolution for the public, should occasionally revolutionize for themselves? it can be but of little moment to the man deprived by law to work for himself, *who is president, Jackson or Adams*.

In England, the situation of the Mechanic is not less enviable—it is with much difficulty he establishes himself in business, or gets a settlement as they term it, other than where he was born or served his apprenticeship. The operation of the pauper law is such, as makes it obligatory on each parish to maintain its native poor; the migration of Mechanics from place to place is under such restrictions, as not many of them are able to comply with—forty days residence gives a journeyman a settlement, and entitles him to support from the poor rates of the parish, where he may be, if he should need it; to avoid this, the magistrate and tythe gatherer are immediately on the alert, to expel every stranger from their limits, who is not able to give security that he will not become a burthen to the Parish; the young Mechanic, not having it in his power to give such un-

reasonable bonds, is compelled to retrace his steps to the place of his nativity, and there linger out an existence, imposed upon him by the laws of his country, directly calculated to make him useless and miserable. Any young man, thus trammelled, on his first entrance into active life, and compelled to immure himself on the spot where he was born; will either become exasperated, and out of humour with himself and every one else, and of course unfit for social life; or, on reflection, finding himself unprotected, and restrained from exertion by the very laws which should sustain and encourage him, become careless and dissipated, and add one more to the vast multitude of their starving poor.

In Germany, the case is no better, if so good. In that country, they have corporations or crafts as they are called, formed by the individuals of each particular trade, and recognized by the laws of their country, with a fund to defray the corporate expences, and in every considerable town, a house of entertainment is selected, or harbour of each craft, &c. No one is allowed to establish his business, or set up as a master workman, unless he is admitted a free-man or member of the craft, and such is the condition, that no one is admitted as a master workman in any trade, except to supply the place of some one retired or deceased; when such vacancy occurs, all those, desirous of occupying the birth, present a piece of their best work as a recommendation to obtain the place. Thus you perceive, that every man is obliged to submit himself to all the chances of a popular election; and for what, we ask? why to ascertain whether or not he may have the *privilege of earning his bread by the sweat of his brow*;—to ask of his countrymen, and friends, and the government the privilege of labouring with his own hands for the *maintainance of his wife and children!* Most humiliating indeed, this, Brethren.

But worse than all this, is the restraint imposed on the journeymen of that country by those little self-created despotic crafts. As soon as the years of Apprentiship have expired, the young inexperienced Mechanic is compelled to *wander*, as it is termed, for three years. This wanderer is furnished with a duly authenticated wandering book, with which he is obliged, willing or not, to go forth, and seek employment. In whatever place he arrives he presents himself

with his credentials, at the house, or harbour of his craft,—here he is allowed one day's food, and a night's lodging gratis ; if he wishes employment, he is assisted in obtaining it ; if not, or gets disappointed in finding employ, he is compelled to start off forthwith, and pursue this miserable, wandering life for three years, before he can any where be admitted as a master ; and after all this wandering and waiting for dead men's shoes, if he be so fortunate as to preserve his morals in any good degree, he is subjected to all the partiality and jealousy, of an election by his fellow-craftsmen, who of course, are all anxious to obtain the birth for themselves.

These few instances, shew us plainly the immeasurable difference between the local situation of European and American Mechanics. Every book of travels in Europe, discloses to us the misery and ignorance of their working population. Why is all this ? is it not the restrictions imposed on them by their government, and the policy pursued respecting general education, which has produced and continues this state of things ? Is it not a fact, that at this time the question is in discussion in England, how far, it may be prudent, and safe, to enlighten the people ? The question whether they should, or should not have education, appears to be given up ; not so respecting the *quantum* necessary to make them good citizens ; but that a certain proportion is absolutely necessary, is at last admitted, and we don't think it at all hazardous in saying, that until they discover the necessity of a more general system of education, they may remain safe in all the enjoyments naturally arising from an ignorant and vicious population, such as *civil commotion, revolution, &c.*

How different the operation of our inestimable constitution ! Here, every individual is left free to act, and select his own occupation, and pursue it, unrestrained by government acts ; the government rather encourage and sustain us by placing it in the power of every one to arrive to high honours solely by his own merit. We may with much gratitude say that our lines have fallen in pleasant places.

Brethren, what, I ask, would be thought of that man who should come forward coolly, and seriously, and attempt to maintain that a general system of education was dangerous

to the public in this country? He would be considered beside himself, and a fit subject for the insane hospital, rather than a friend and benefactor of mankind. The doctrine of educating the few to the exclusion of the many, if it ever did obtain, in the opinion of any, seriously, we are led from present appearances to believe, has become entirely *obsolete*, and we think at this time, it will not be questioned that the plan of education pursued in this part of our country, is the great cause of difference between the Mechanics in Europe and America. Sure it is, that the Mechanics of America, will bear a comparison in point of morality and general intelligence, with any class within our knowledge, and probably, in the world; and the only way to maintain this station, and *progress* with all, is to increase, and perpetuate the means of improving the mind and placing them within the reach of every rational creature in society. Mr. Everett, in his address before the Mechanics of Boston, says, "an intelligent class can scarce ever be, as a class vicious, never as a class indolent;" and we say, in a free state, they never can, or will be oppressed, so long as they continue to improve, and act, in unison with each other; the balance is in their hands, and they can turn it either way they choose, and *when* they choose, and right and fitting it should be in the hands of as virtuous, patriotic and benevolent a class as the commonwealth can boast of.

The situation of Mechanics in Society, is of vastly more importance than is generally admitted; their peculiar location between the two extremes of poverty and riches, is as the Prophet Agur strongly intimates, an enviable one, but it also is a very important and accountable one. Many arduous duties naturally devolve on them, from which the other classes are as naturally free. Thus situated in the centre of Society, like the sun in his meridian, reflecting his invigorating rays on all around and about him, distributing his benefits and influence, amongst the sons of men, under every possible circumstance imaginable. But for him, what could the Philosopher, the Astronomer, the Farmer, the Merchant, or Manufacturer do? But for the Mechanic, their operations must forever cease, all further investigations into nature's infinite mine, remain unseen and unknown; these operations cannot be continued, without instruments and tools of every

sort and description, from the mighty steam engine to the hoe and pick-axe, from the lofty and majestic ship to the mending of a tin pot,—all—all are necessary, and indispensable ; without these, in their infinite variety, all further improvement in the arts must come to a dead stand, and to produce this great variety of tools and instruments of every description, an amazing amount of labour is required, and fortunately for us, we consider it no dishonor to do it. The day has passed, if it ever existed, when in the opinion of *common sense* it was dishonorable to labour. When did you ever hear of a man's being eulogized for *laziness* and *stupidity*, for *adroitness* in laying in bed, or neglect of person or property ? Never, but on the contrary, you often hear praise bestowed on those, who endure the greatest privations—perform the most labour—indulge least in sleep and indolence. This was the doctrine of our beloved immortal Franklin. He thought it praise worthy to take his wheelbarrow, and go for his paper, and wheel it to his office and as he said, when neither poverty or necessity compelled him ; the example he thought was good—so we think.

Again, look at the Mechanics in another point of view. The duty of educating a numerous offspring, beside his apprentices, is of vital importance to himself as well as to Society in general. This is a duty, Brethren, which should lay near our hearts. The moral health of the community depends in a great measure on its punctual performance. No class of men can do more towards *forming*, and *sustaining* a national character than the *Mechanics* ; their offspring is usually numerous ; therefore their influence is great, and salutary, if properly directed. Celibacy obtains not amongst them. It is too cold and frigid for their warm hearts and brave bosoms, too unsocial and reserved for their generous feelings; a Bachelor among the Mechanics of our day, is as rare and unseasonable an article as a cucumber in January, or a snow bird in July. As it respects the moral instruction of our Apprentices, we are bound by parental obligations ; these should be carefully discharged. They in future must fill our places, and do the like offices to others ; therefore, they should be taught in addition to the art or trade, the principles of virtue and industry, punctuality, honesty, sobriety, generosity, and last though not least, to *respect themselves*, and

thereby secure the respect of others. The habit of imitation in the young, is a matter of great consideration, and requires the watchful eye of the master; and should induce much caution and control over himself.

Brethren, if it be an object worthy of attention, to advance the standing and influence of that indispensable class of men, the Mechanics of Portsmouth, it is time something were done; it is time we were about it—not that it is so very arduous a task, but, that it is a slow one, and requires diligence, perseverance, and attention in the execution. Of those brethren, who are advanced in years, much cannot be expected other than counsel and advice. It is to the middle aged, and young men that we look, for execution in this business; these are the proper subjects of improvement and gradual progression—every pains should be taken, and every means employed, to improve and cultivate their minds; it is an honorable and happy employment, and well rewards the labourer. The mind of man, is the great and only source of permanent happiness and freedom. It is the mind that anticipates, enjoys, sympathizes, projects and decides, and makes us independent freemen. Who or what can control a well disciplined honest, inflexible mind? A threefold cord cant bind it, nor prison walls confine it; neither can the cunning of the lawyer, or the subtlety of the priest, swerve it from its honest purpose. It is to the improvement of the minds of our young men, and apprentices, that we look with anxious solicitude for the permanent advancement of the Mechanics of Portsmouth.

Under the present state of things, we conceive it absolutely necessary something should be done; look around, and in almost every place, you will discover something on foot for general improvement, and shall we be last? shall it be left to us *alone* to bring up the tardy rear?—we hope not. Brethren, could we be made to believe that our Heavenly Father had here been less liberal in the distribution of talent and capacity to improve, than in other places, we would desist and press this subject no farther; but, this we have no reason to believe. The difference of capacity in man, is not so great as many think it; therefore we say if we continue to neglect our duty and move on in our old fashioned monotonous way, it is morally certain that our young men, must come

forward under great disadvantages to themselves and Society; at least, 20 or 30 years behind those, who have kept pace with the improvements of the times, and taken advantage of the opportunities, so liberally held out for information. The mortification of being thus situated must be very apparent.

Again we think there is some danger of losing the authority delegated to man for ages past; simply by neglecting his opportunity for improvement.

Since my remembrance, it was considered by many quite unnecessary, if not unbecoming, for young Ladies to attend many studies, which are now held to be important, such as Geography, History, Natural Philosophy, &c. we do not regret this change—far from it—we rejoice at it, we repeat, brethren, we rejoice at this improvement, but we should be sorry indeed, should the education of the males, become of secondary consideration; if there is any preference in the case, we think the *males* are entitled to it. Their peculiar situation in society, the multifarious duties naturally devolving on them, are reasons sufficient, to shew us the necessity of particular attention to their education; now in case the education of the young Ladies should *exceed*, that of the Gentlemen, the government of their families would necessarily devolve on them, which would be rather a mortifying case, but a just one, and we think it better the government remain where nature ordained it should. Dont forget brethren, that “knowledge is Power.”

“Knowledge” as pourtrayed by the late Hon. De Wit Clinton, is extatrick in enjoyment, unlimited in space, and infinite in duration; it fears no danger, spares no pains, omits no exertion. It scales the mountains, looks into the volcano, dives into the ocean, perforates the earth, wings its flight into the skies, encircles the globe, explores sea and land, contemplates the distant, examines the minute, comprehends the great, and asends to the sublime. No place too remote for its grasp, no heavens too exalted for its reach. Its seat is the bosom of God, its voice the harmony of the world, all things in Heaven and earth do it homage, the very least as feeling its care, the greatest as not exempt from its power, yet all—all with uniform consent, admiring it as the parent of peace and happiness.”

I would suggest to this Association, the propriety of so far altering the constitution, as to admit Honorary Members. We think the benefits resulting from such an alteration, would be great, both in point of influence and improvement, especially, if we introduce Gentlemen of science, talent and liberality; it will add energy and give a fresh impulse to the acquisition of knowledge among us, and vastly extend the field of intellectual research, by being associated with those whose business it is, to explore, and minutely investigate, men and things—to discover the secrets of nature—unfold and expose the properties of mind and matter, and furnish evidence of the faculties we possess, for progression in Knowledge of all kinds. If a course of this sort should be adopted and a familiar intercourse be kept up with the literary men of the place, we think the interests of the Association would be much advanced.

The mode of electing Honorary Members in the Boston Association, is the same as in the case of ordinary members. They have no voice in any of the doings of the Society nor share in any of the elementary advantages; theirs have been generally elected, in consequence of some donation having been made to the funds, or contribution by their good offices in some other way to the promotion of the objects of the institution,—their Honorary members at present, comprise a good portion of the first talent in the City, such as the Governor, and Lt.Governor, J. Quincy, H. G. Otis, C. Sprague, W. Sullivan, Wm. Sturges, E. Everett, &c.

One word more, brethren (if your patience is not entirely exhausted.) To effect one of the most desirable objects of this institution, the permanent advancement of its members to respectability and usefulness, is the common interest of the whole; here a brilliant opportunity offers, to apply "*the union of effort*" with effect, and if we should be so fortunate, as to hit upon the best possible mode, we shall most assuredly accomplish our purpose.

It will be conceded on all hands, that an increase of Knowledge will effect it, but how to obtain this increase, in the most economical manner, is the question. Suppose for instance, we suspend business for a season, and attend to the study of some science immediately connected with our avocations? this wont do, for in the mean time, poverty, raw-ribbed

poverty is staring us in the face, and our wives and little ones are suffering for the daily income of our labour; and of all duties, the most imperious, is to provide for our own household. Well, what is to be done—suppose, we institute another course of Lectures, such as we had last season, and apply ourselves, individually, to study when we have leisure; we think this will do—we think it the best and most economical plan; it consumes but little time, and but little money; and is, or may be made productive of much good, both to the lecturer and the audience. Of the reception with which it will be met by the public, there cannot be a doubt; the experiment of last winter was sufficient to test that point, and if the members of this Association will consent to tax themselves 25 cents each, a course of lectures may be continued for 6 months, 4 times a month which would be ample for a season. This plan is in favour with the most intelligent men of our country, and is thought to be well calculated for the general distribution of Science amongst the people; and certainly, it is a rational, pleasant, and cheap way of spending an evening, to say the least of it. We cannot but view this effort as a harbinger of good to our town, and to the cause of general improvement. Who knows, but it may awaken, and fan into life and even brilliancy, some latent spark amongst us which would otherwise lay dormant. Knowledge, like Power, has been too long confined to the few, for the comfort and happiness of the many; the time is coming, rapidly too, when the mass of our population may become as familiar with the sciences generally, as are some of our learned men, and we further believe that lectures on these subjects are well adapted to the wants of those, who in early life were deprived of sufficient education; such being our case, in most instances, and accompanied with the laudable desire of knowing as much as our neighbours, we think it worth an exertion to resuscitate them if we can. Had the attention of the public been earlier called to the subject of general improvement, and means adopted that are now in successful operation, we should not be dependent on Foreigners for correct descriptions of our country; we seriously doubt whether the *palm* would have been awarded to an Italian for the best account of our independence, or that a London Mechanic

would find encouragement in collecting materials for our History.

The very liberal manner in which Gentlemen came forward last season, entitles them to the gratitude and thanks of this Association, which we now frankly tender, not doubting, that if again requested, the same frank and generous spirit will be expressed and manifested.

In some few instances, attempts were made, to turn this system of public lecturing, into a *mysterious, dark, hidden, political, or sectarian* plan, to entrap and ensnare the credulous and unwary. But on perceiving, that men of *all* political parties, and *all* sects of religion, came forward, and joined heart and hand in the cause, these *restless, suspicious* souls, became nonsuited, and retired, bearing with them, all the *honours* incident to such illiberal and unjust insinuations. We are happy to state, for the credit of this Association, that, these jealousies did not originate with *them*, it is to be hoped they are too ingenuous and high minded, to harbour such unmanly views. There is no better *sign*, "of a brave, and honest mind, than a hard hand," and we are sure our brethren carry *this* signal always with them.

Brethren, bare your *bosoms*, with the invaluable motto of our Association, and march boldly and fearlessly forward to the execution of your duties as citizens of a free, and happy country. Pursue, undauntedly, that course your judgment dictates, in every thing that tends to ameliorate the condition of man. Be just and fear not, and leave the result with Heaven.

ERATTA.—On page 8, bottom line, for *permanent*, read *prominent*.

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